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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 7 July 2003, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mr. HUSSEIN (Vice-President)	(Ethiopia)
later:	Mr. ROSENTHAL (President)	(Guatemala)

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In the absence of Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (agenda item 3) (continued)

(a) FOLLOW-UP TO POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE COUNCIL (A/57/497 and Add.1; E/2003/57, 61, 64 and 89; E/2003/CRP.1)

(b) REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARDS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME/UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND, THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND AND THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (A/58/72-E/2003/53; E/2003/13, 14, 34 (Part I), 36 and 48; E/2003/L.8; DP/2003/1, 9, 17 and 26)

(c) ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (TCDC/13/4)

Mr. CIVILI (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs), introducing the various reports of the Secretary-General on the operational activities of the United Nations programmes and funds, said that most of the central themes and trends had already been mentioned during the high-level debate earlier in the session. One obvious area of progress was the simplification and harmonization of development initiatives at the country level, as emphasized in the report of the Secretary-General on the progress achieved in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/201 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (E/2003/61) and the consolidated list of issues related to the coordination of operational activities (E/2003/CRP.1).

Intensive efforts had been made to facilitate programme approval and work out financial modalities, and a variety of new tools had been introduced to ensure that any savings that were made benefited the recipient countries directly. Evaluation had become an integral part of an apparatus to enhance programme delivery at the systemic level rather than by individual project, a task considerably lightened by the wide-ranging cooperation that currently existed within the United Nations system.

An overriding development agenda had emerged from the numerous conferences and summits of recent years, and the new global partnerships that had been formed should focus on implementation with a renewed effort to address the economic and social problems of the developing countries. The reports of the Secretary-General currently before the Council demonstrated that the United Nations system was endeavouring to meet its responsibilities with a clear focus on results, although decreased levels of funding threatened to marginalize the Organization's efforts in the development arena. The best way in which the Secretariat could assist the Council in its work was by providing honest assessments, hoping in return to receive clear guidance for the tasks ahead.

Mr. DUQUE GONZÁLEZ (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)) said that JIU had been established by the General Assembly as the sole external oversight body with system-wide competence to verify that the resources of the United Nations were used effectively and to make appropriate recommendations.

With specific reference to the report of JIU on the extension of water-related technical cooperation projects to end-beneficiaries: bridging the gap between the normative and the operational in the United Nations system (A/57/497) and the comments of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) thereon (A/57/497/Add.1), it should be noted that water-related issues had recently received considerable attention from the international community, as reflected in the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development in May 2003 to include water and sanitation among the priority themes to be considered as part of its programme of work for 2004 and 2005.

The report's findings revealed there were many opportunities within the United Nations system for coordination and collaboration on water-related issues. Recommendation 6, for example, advocated the concept of an "operational United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)" conducted in close consultation with the countries concerned. It was intended to translate priorities and objectives agreed upon in the UNDAF context into specific, integrated technical cooperation programmes and projects to be designed and implemented

jointly or in a coordinated manner by United Nations programmes and funds. The overall objective was to bring the UNDAF process as a planning and coordinating tool a step closer to the field level and increase its impact on operational activities at that level.

In his latest reform report on "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), the Secretary-General had called for joint programming, pooling of resources and common databases and knowledge networks among United Nations system organizations to ensure that their combined resources were put to best use. The concept of an "operational UNDAF" responded to the Secretary-General's call without imposing any new burdens on national Governments.

Recommendation 7 called for the establishment of expert-level United Nations water committees to enhance the effectiveness of the work of the resident coordinators. Recommendation 9 was in line with the stated policy of calling upon the organizations of the United Nations system to make additional efforts to promote the development of national evaluation capacities and communicate the findings of evaluation activities to national entities. Recommendation 10 was intended to clarify roles and responsibilities among the various United Nations actors in the area of technical cooperation in general.

Recommendations 1 to 5, which referred to the work of the Subcommittee on Water Resources of the former Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), sought to establish a stronger relationship between the activities of the new inter-agency coordination arrangement at the global level and the activities of United Nations organizations at the country level. The objectives remained the same; they should be vigorously pursued in order to avoid detachment from needs and realities in the field and to support United Nations field operations, two important goals that the Subcommittee on Water Resources had largely failed to achieve.

Access by country teams to the knowledge and expertise available in the United Nations system around the world was sorely needed as far as water-related technical cooperation projects were concerned. No single database existed for water operations executed by United Nations entities. The dispersion of available data, and the fact that some databases were more comprehensive and up to date than others, made it difficult to track United Nations water projects system-wide or to rely on the information currently available. A "one-stop", reliable

database was therefore of crucial importance, and a dedicated web site was an absolute prerequisite for the promotion of water-related activities within the United Nations system.

JIU welcomed the observation made by CEB regarding the need for an institutional focal point within the United Nations system to steer follow-up actions relating to integrated water management and development. Mechanisms for inter-agency coordination in the area of fresh water were essential to achieve coherence and consistency, and there should be consultations to determine the best use that could be made of the inter-agency network of experts and other collaborative arrangements. He hoped that the Council would invite the Commission on Sustainable Development to consider the JIU report and include recommendations 1 to 5 in its findings on the theme of water at its forthcoming session in 2004.

Mr. ABOUTAHIR (Observer for Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that operational activities for development in the United Nations system should contribute to national efforts to stimulate development and growth, integrate national priorities and focus on the achievement of the development goals and targets set out in the Millennium Declaration and by the major United Nations conferences and summits.

Operational activities should continue to be universal, voluntary and grant-based. They should also preserve their neutral and multilateral character and their ability to respond to the real needs of developing countries. The Group of 77 and China were very concerned by the stagnation and decline of the core resources available to United Nations funds and programmes over the last few years, and hoped that the recently observed trend towards an increase in core resources would be maintained. Donor countries should boost their contributions to the core budgets of United Nations system organizations in order to ensure a continued, predictable and adequate level of funding for operational activities. The international community should use the momentum of the Monterrey Consensus to work towards real financing for development.

The Group of 77 and China were well aware of the importance of evaluations in the management process within United Nations organizations, funds and programmes, and of absorbing the lessons to be learned from such evaluations. In order to multiply the benefits of evaluations in terms of effectiveness at the field level, it was imperative to ensure the

participation of national authorities and relevant stakeholders in the design, programming, implementation and evaluation process, including the formulation of indicators to measure success or failure.

Within the framework of the next triennial comprehensive policy review, due to be undertaken in 2004, the Secretary-General should focus on ways to ensure adequate funding for operational activities, ways to improve the assistance provided by the United Nations development system to developing countries, integrating operational activities for development into national efforts and priorities, capacity-building, maintaining an adequate level of human resources, harmonizing and simplifying development initiatives, assessing the impact of UNDAF instruments on the effectiveness of operational activities at the country level and absorbing the lessons learned.

Lastly, the Group of 77 and China welcomed the completion of the formalities for setting up the World Solidarity Fund pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/265. The Fund was ready to receive contributions, and the next task would be to appoint a governing body to oversee its strategic management and promotion. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) should launch a campaign to promote the Fund and mobilize the international community, national Governments and civil society to support it in its stated purpose of improving the living conditions of poor communities throughout the world.

Mr. BRUNI (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia and the associated countries of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, said that the Union, recognizing that the United Nations system provided a unique framework for addressing the global challenges facing the international community, attached the utmost importance to the outcomes of United Nations development activities. It was vital that more predictable funding should be made available for those activities. In that respect, the multi-year funding frameworks adopted by a number of agencies were a major step forward, from the viewpoint of both donors and beneficiaries.

The Union attached special importance to the contribution made by common country assessments (CCAs), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) to coordination, coherence and complementarity, given that the ultimate goal was to strengthen the ability of the Governments of developing countries to assume a greater leadership role and to take ownership of development outcomes. It welcomed the progress made by the members of the United Nations Development Group in the harmonization and simplification process, and supported the further strengthening of the role of the resident coordinators with a view to ensuring the effective use of UNDAFs and the promotion of good practices. Evaluation should be used more systematically not only within the United Nations system but also by the entire donor community and by recipient countries and stakeholders. Priority should be given to evaluations that covered all United Nations development activities in a particular country, so as to encourage the emergence of a culture of evaluation at the country level. The most appropriate place for reviewing individual UNDAFs was in the joint boards of the various funds and programmes, and all United Nations activities in a country should be evaluated against the outcomes included in the results matrices that formed part of the new UNDAFs.

While acknowledging that voluntary contributions had become the principal mode of funding for United Nations development activities, he noted that the downward trend in official development assistance (ODA) had been reversed at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey. Indeed, the Union had made a formal commitment to raise its collective level of ODA to 0.39 per cent of gross national income by 2006. Nevertheless, a renewed dialogue should be established with the donor community in order to expand the donor base and stabilize core funding.

He called on the Secretary-General to focus more closely on the linkage between funding and results in his future reports, particularly in the forthcoming triennial comprehensive policy review. That review should assess the effectiveness of the reforms of United Nations operational activities in improving development outcomes and should pay particular attention to the value of CCAs and UNDAF in improving operational activities, the use of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to help align operational activities and national development efforts, the harmonization and simplification processes, capacity-building, the adequacy of development funding, the lessons learned at the country level from evaluation activities and the adequacy of the human resources available at the country level within the United Nations system to support national efforts.

Noting that the Union was already the largest financial contributor to the United Nations system, he highlighted the revised framework agreement on the financing and co-financing of United Nations projects signed by the European Commission and the United Nations in April 2003, and expressed confidence that closer cooperation between the Union and the United Nations would contribute significantly to the achievement of the MDGs.

Mr. PALU (Australia) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the funding of development cooperation activities of the United Nations system (E/2003/89) rightly emphasized that national Governments had the primary responsibility for formulating and implementing national development strategies, but it was also crucial that the Governments of developing countries should make effective use of their own resources and ensure that there was an appropriate environment within which the best use could be made of international resources. The stagnation in the provision of core resources and growth in earmarked funding reflected the donors' critical appraisal of United Nations bodies' past performances and their desire to ensure that aid was used effectively, as well as increased demands on aid budgets. Each individual agency must therefore ensure that its operations were relevant, effective and carried out efficiently.

He welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the assessment of the lessons learned by United Nations organizations from evaluation activities at the field level (E/2003/64), but said that more needed to be done to integrate the evaluation functions of the different agencies, funds and programmes at the country level in order to derive the maximum benefit from the lessons learned by different parts of the United Nations system.

Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/201, as described in the report on that subject (E/2003/61), was impressive. He supported the report's recommendations that work should continue to strengthen the CCA and UNDAF processes, enhance and accelerate simplification and harmonization efforts, strengthen field-level coordination and make greater use of shared premises and administrative services. His delegation strongly encouraged the use of joint offices and joint programming, particularly in countries with a small United Nations presence, and urged the United Nations system to consider introducing genuinely regional and subregional programmes in cases where funding was limited. The emphasis in the forthcoming triennial comprehensive policy review should be on an

assessment of the effectiveness of reforms in improving development outcomes and enhancing coherence in programming at the country level, on further harmonization and simplification, and on the lessons to be drawn from evaluation activities.

Mr. SIV (United States of America) said that United Nations operational agencies were making impressive progress in implementing the Secretary-General's 1997 reforms, but the outcomes of recent high-level summits, including the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, had drastically changed the development dynamic. "Business as usual" was no longer an option.

The report of the Secretary-General on the funding of development cooperation activities (E/2003/89) would have benefited from a broader discussion on sources of funding other than ODA. Some novel suggestions for placing funding for operational activities on a stable footing had been made earlier in the current session of the Council by participants in the high-level panel discussion on resources for operational activities for development. The suggestions included the use of minimum assessments and long-term country-related funding consortia and the banning of voluntary contributions. While he did not agree that voluntary contributions should be banned, as that form of funding had played a key role in making operational agencies more results-based, there was certainly a need to explore more creative solutions.

He would have appreciated more discussion in the report on ways of achieving greater complementarity in the roles of the various development partners and on how the United Nations development system expected to incorporate into country-level planning activities the new funding announced in Monterrey. His Government's position was to support strongly agencies that produced results in assisting countries to develop good governance and sound policies. Unfortunately, the report focused too much on inputs and not enough on the actual benefits to the poor. Moreover, the World Bank analysis cited in the report did not distinguish between the differential impact on growth of private, as opposed to public, investment and its cost estimates were not based on an understanding of the kinds of assistance that were most effective.

Mr. FEDOTOV (Russian Federation) said that the current discussion would make a valuable contribution to the forthcoming triennial comprehensive policy review. Some principal themes had already emerged: national development goals must be aligned with the

MDGs, the operational activities of the United Nations must be integrated into social and economic development plans at the country level, inter-agency cooperation and coordination should be improved and rules and regulations simplified and harmonized, national capacity should be fortified, an adequate level of funding should be maintained, and allocated resources should be utilized effectively.

The priority of the operational activities undertaken by the United Nations funds and programmes should be to assist countries to achieve the MDGs. Such activities should be constantly refined in the light of lessons learned. Because different countries had different needs, the targets and indicators for each of the MDGs should be tailored to the economic situation of a given country and to national plans and priorities. Yet, at the same time, efforts to streamline and enhance the effectiveness of operational activities should continue.

His Government endorsed the approach of mobilizing resources for operational activities through pledging conferences organized by individual funds and programmes, but recognized that additional funding was sometimes required to achieve maximum effectiveness, for example if the time frame for a particular activity needed to be extended or for promotion and publicity purposes. It was also important to continue to place emphasis on national capacity-building, for example by training local personnel and making use of local technologies.

Strategies for national capacity-building should be incorporated into the CCAs and UNDAF, and a common system of benchmarks and indicators devised to measure achievements in the area of capacity-building. However, such initiatives should never detract from the country programmes themselves or incur additional expenditure.

Recipient country Governments should have a greater say in drawing up the CCA and UNDAF instruments. While not opposed to raising the profile of UNDAF as a framework document for operational planning purposes at the country level, his Government was unenthusiastic about its undifferentiated application to all countries, especially those with a low level of programme resources.

The system of resident coordinators needed to be strengthened, especially their role in mobilizing country teams to achieve the MDGs. Ongoing inter-agency initiatives to assess the performance of resident coordinators were to be applauded. The importance of enhanced

cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions within their respective spheres of competence could not be overstated, the goal being to identify mutual complementarities and streamline the allocation of assistance in the light of the priorities of the recipient country. Greater coordination between the CCA/UNDAF mechanism and PRSPs should be encouraged.

In the context of international conflicts and emergencies, the sheer magnitude of the United Nations humanitarian and development efforts called for a much more coordinated and effective response from the various funds and programmes, especially in the early stages of such conflicts and emergencies. The Organization's universality was an enormous comparative advantage; it possessed an unmatched potential to marshal the resources of its own agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). To that end, efforts should be made to strengthen cooperation between the various funds and programmes and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Mr. GONG Tingrong (China) said his delegation welcomed the progress made by United Nations funds and programmes in the field of development but expressed concern about the lack of core resources for their operational activities. Although core resources had increased slightly in the past two years, the long-term stagnation in resource flows, when adjusted for inflation, meant that the resource base had declined in real terms, leading to cuts or delays in many country programmes and undermining efforts to achieve the MDGs. However, he noted that ODA was set to increase as a result of the consensus reached at the Monterrey Conference. He called on all the United Nations funds and programmes to redouble their efforts to mobilize resources, and on donors to honour their commitments and increase their contributions to core resources.

It was very important for organizations within the United Nations system to simplify and harmonize their rules and procedures. He supported the joint formulation of country programmes by those organizations at the field level, as duplication of work and competition for resources had been a source of problems in the past. Development funds and programmes should draw lessons from their past experience with capacity-building, which should be mainstreamed in their operational activities and should also be country-driven.

He welcomed the practical measures taken to improve South-South cooperation, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/201, and encouraged the funds and programmes of the United Nations development system to support such cooperation, which could play an important role in efforts to achieve the MDGs.

Mr. LEUS (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that, given the importance of health to development and poverty reduction, the primary contribution of WHO to development was to improve people's health status through its field-level activities. WHO also worked to enable individual countries to exert a greater influence on global and regional public health action, giving priority to the transfer of knowledge and the development of national capacities. Its recent experience with the epidemic of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) had shown once again how continued investment in training and networking paid off on a global scale.

With a view to improving its performance at the country level, WHO intended to align its contribution more closely with national priorities, mainly through its country cooperation strategies, which were based on a comprehensive needs assessment agreed upon with the national authorities. WHO also cooperated fully with other organizations of the United Nations family within the system of resident coordinators. It was a member of the United Nations Development Group and recognized CCAs and UNDAF as important mechanisms for improving cooperation at the country level. WHO staff were encouraged to cooperate with those mechanisms to ensure that adequate health policies and investments in health were integrated into national poverty-reduction strategies.

In its work at the country level, WHO emphasized the need to reduce transaction costs for recipient countries and to maximize the potential for capacity-building while ensuring operational accountability within the United Nations system and with respect to outside partners.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan) said that his Government had always attached great importance to the operational activities of the United Nations and was very concerned about the decline in funding for the core budgets of UNDP and its sister agencies, particularly in the light of the targets set by the General Assembly for increases in the resources of UNDP. To reflect

the priorities of the developing country concerned, rather than donors' priorities, he suggested that voluntary contributions should give priority to the implementation of the country's PRSP, if one had been agreed upon.

Mr. BRIZ (Guatemala) said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement made by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He was particularly concerned by the fact that, while ODA was increasing for the first time in more than 15 years, the mobilization of core resources had come to a virtual standstill. Developing countries were improving their capacity to absorb assistance precisely at a time when the United Nations was unable to meet their demands. Those demands could, of course, be met from other sources but the United Nations had certain comparative advantages, such as impartiality and the capacity to assimilate the priorities of the recipient country.

There had been a significant improvement in the coordination and cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly between UNDP and the World Bank. Given that those institutions mutually complemented each other, it was necessary to provide each of them with adequate resources but UNDP continued to receive insufficient core resources, even if its extrabudgetary resources had shown some improvement.

In recent years, although the United Nations had been successful in creating strategic and policy guidelines, it had been less successful at implementing them at the country level. Core resources should thus be increased so that a greater balance could be achieved between analytical activities and operational ones.

Efforts had been made for many years, without success, to persuade sources of bilateral financing to increase their financial commitments to the operational activities of the United Nations. It was to be hoped that the 2004 triennial comprehensive policy review would be more successful, particularly in terms of laying the foundations for a programme based on substantial core resources.

Mr. GOPINATHAN (India), having associated his delegation with the statement delivered by the observer for Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the renewed consideration of funding issues had come at a particularly opportune moment since,

although most developing countries had indicated a preference for external assistance channelled through the United Nations funds and programmes, the resource situation remained tenuous and core resources had declined.

Funding decisions were, in the final analysis, a manifestation of political will. Such decisions could often be seen as a manifestation of the existence of social cohesion at the international level. The outcomes of the various United Nations conferences and summits were premised on the existence of such cohesion. The time had come to meet the commitments made at those meetings.

His delegation was seriously concerned by the tendency for humanitarian assistance to "crowd out" the resources required for development. In the long term, development assistance reduced the need for emergency humanitarian assistance. Famine could be avoided if socio-economic systems were developed in such a way that they became resilient to the impact of natural disasters. Such assistance was a sensible option to pursue.

The coordination of efforts between bilateral donors and the United Nations system should be restricted to the field level and should be conducted under the leadership of the recipient Governments. The efforts of the United Nations Development Group task force to link its simplification and harmonization efforts with those of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) went beyond its mandate. Although he welcomed the production of good practice reference papers, the points of reference for UNDP should be determined by the Member States and not by OECD/DAC.

It was disappointing that the United Nations funds and programmes were tending to be used largely for advocacy, advice and monitoring purposes when their purpose was to upgrade the human, physical and financial asset base of the poor. Although interventions might be small, they would, if successful, provide replicable solutions and possibly models for mainstreaming.

Ms. OH Hyun-joo (Republic of Korea) said that her delegation commended the progress that had been made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 56/201, particularly at the field level. It noted with satisfaction the adoption of a standard format for reporting and annual planning within the country programme action plans, as well as the

development of new standard documents. It also welcomed the utilization of information communications technologies as a cost-effective tool in enhancing the simplification of procedures. Nevertheless, additional efforts were required.

Her Government welcomed the modest increase in core resources in 2002 and hoped that the trend would continue. It commended the efforts made to improve quality support and assurance for country teams with a view to developing a comprehensive oversight system for the CCA and UNDAF processes. There should, however, be increased dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions in order to strengthen the link between those processes and the PRSPs. Moreover, as humanitarian assistance had become a key component of the United Nations operational activities, resident coordinators should be better equipped to respond to increasingly complex emergency situations. Information obtained from evaluations at the field level could be better utilized, for example by enhancing the capacity for identifying, categorizing and synthesizing lessons learned and creating and promoting access to national databases.

Her delegation attached great importance to the role of South-South cooperation in the overall development process. Technical cooperation among developing countries, in particular, was an innovative and effective tool for integrating developing countries into the international economic system.

Mr. SAGACH (Ukraine) said that the Council's substantive session should play a catalytic role in furthering the implementation of the triennial comprehensive policy review. The comprehensive vision for development that had emerged from the recent conferences and summits had brought operational aspects to the forefront of the global development agenda. The operational activities of the United Nations were crucial to the Governments of programme countries in their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals.

Visible progress had been made by the United Nations system in enhancing and rationalizing its operational activities. There were encouraging indications that field-level coordination was progressing well. His delegation particularly appreciated the efforts of the United Nation's Development Group to improve the quality of the CCA and UNDAF processes. However, there was still room for further improvement. More attention should be paid to

regional perspectives and efforts should be made to encourage the involvement of as many United Nations organizations as possible and to ensure better integration of those instruments with the national development priorities and strategies.

Despite improvements in some spheres of development cooperation, the shortfall of core funding continued to be a major challenge. Although there had been positive trends in terms of the financial stabilization of several United Nations funds and programmes, additional efforts were required to strengthen the funding of operational activities and to ensure that resources for development were predictable and long-term.

Partnership between the United Nations operational agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions, donor countries and other relevant stakeholders was the bedrock of operational activities for development. He welcomed the fact that cooperation between them had improved and urged them to build on that progress. More efforts should be made to forge partnerships with the private sector and NGOs.

The United Nations system had clearly proved its effectiveness in supporting development processes worldwide. His Government commended the activities of the United Nations office in Kyiv, headed by the UNDP Regional Coodinator. UNDP should continue to play a key role in the implementation of projects such as the Chernobyl Recovery and Development Programme. It was to be hoped that donor countries would continue to lend their support to such projects.

Mr. WAKI (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that resolution 56/201 had facilitated United Nations reform and had been the driving force for further streamlining, simplifying and harmonizing. A tremendous amount of progress had been made in recent months in some of the key areas covered by the resolution. From the outset, UNFPA had been an active member of the inter-agency task force on simplification and harmonization. It was hoped that the tools developed by the task force would strengthen the effectiveness of the funds and programmes and lead to a reduction in costs.

The current drive towards simplification and harmonization had been facilitated by the adoption of a unifying development agenda, namely, the MDGs, and the renewed focus on poverty reduction. National poverty reduction strategies and the PRSPs were increasingly

providing programmatic frameworks for a coordinated response by programme countries and their development partners. UNFPA had already taken steps to align its programme guidelines with the MDGs, especially in the fields of population, reproductive health and gender, and had made a number of changes to its organizational structure. National plans and the priorities of programme countries had always been, and remained, the central focus of the support and assistance by UNFPA.

However, simplification and harmonization of rules and procedures did not make much of a difference if no efforts were made to improve national systems and procedures. Consequently, UNFPA attached great importance to efforts to streamline donor practices and procedures and harmonize them with those of Governments.

Unless the initiatives towards greater efficiency were matched by an increased trust in the United Nations system as a development partner and increased contributions to core resources, the role of the United Nations system at the country level was in serious peril. It was regrettable that core resources had not increased. Processes and good intentions would not be effective without a strong and sustained commitment from all the partners.

Mr. ROHNER (Observer for Switzerland) said that the operational activities of the United Nations system were constantly facing new demands in an increasingly competitive environment. The issue of multilateral development cooperation was becoming more and more complex. If the United Nations wished to continue to play a key role in international development cooperation, its funds and programmes had to work together more closely.

Progress had been made in implementing the work programme adopted at the previous triennial review and numerous measures to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the field activities of the system were beginning to yield results. All those involved should be thanked. Nevertheless, much remained to be done. Efforts should be made and followed up to ensure the achievement of the goals of the triennial comprehensive policy review before 2004. Steps should be taken, in particular, to simplify certain working methods. The Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Development Group should find and implement methods of cooperation that would reduce the duplication of their work and better exploit the existing potential for synergy.

The United Nations funds and programmes could make an important contribution to the international debate on the effectiveness of assistance and should therefore become more involved. It was also to be hoped that they would become more actively involved in the PRSPs, which was another field where much remained to be done.

The Council should consider the future of financing the system's operational activities. It was important to place the activities in a broader context and consider the role and the importance of those activities in the framework of international development cooperation in general and the multilateral system in particular. The Secretary-General should provide statistics on the whole of the multilateral system and analyse trends so that the Council could assess the actual situation and learn the necessary lessons.

Ms. MAMADOVA (Azerbaijan) said that, in view of the CCA and UNDAF, enhanced coordination between the organizations of the United Nations system had become crucial. She highlighted the importance of a regular evaluation of operational activities, particularly at the field level, and of disseminating the results as widely as possible, for instance over the Internet. Efforts to strengthen national capacities and infrastructure for the use of information and communication technologies should be stepped up, so as to facilitate information sharing. She underlined the role of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in assisting with the elaboration of an information and communication technology country profile in Azerbaijan, and pledged the willingness of her Government to participate fully in the evaluation of operational activities.

The development of a coherent strategic framework at the country level, particularly in countries affected by conflict, was imperative, so as to strike a balance between emergency relief and long-term development objectives. Country teams in crisis-affected countries should receive comprehensive training from the United Nations System Staff College. They should be encouraged to strengthen activities at the grass-roots level, in order to reach the most vulnerable groups. She welcomed increasing dialogue between the Council, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the common focus on achieving the MDGs. Even though her Government had contributed over $5 million to the non-core resources of

UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2001, she welcomed the recent increase in core funding, which was essential for maintaining the predictability and impartiality of operational activities.

Mr. SHIMMURA (Japan) said that development cooperation should strike a balance between broad-based economic growth, on one hand, and basic human needs such as education, health care, water and agriculture, on the other. His Government had provided assistance, on infrastructure development projects for example, designed to boost economic growth in East Asia. A dramatic annual growth rate of 6 per cent had been achieved in that region, which had helped to reduce the number of people living in absolute poverty by approximately 50 per cent over the past decade. Since 2000, his Government had also launched and funded substantial initiatives concerning infectious diseases, basic education and water resources in low-income countries.

It was important to mobilize all available financial resources in addition to ODA, such as domestic funds in developing countries and private capital, including foreign direct investment (FDI), while encouraging efforts towards trade promotion. At the same time, a solid national economic environment had to be established, in order to provide a secure framework for investment. In addition to being one of the largest donors to the core resources of United Nations development funds and programmes, Japan had made non-core contributions towards humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. While core resources were indispensable, non-core resources had an important role to play in meeting specific objectives or urgent needs.

He called for greater accountability, through regular evaluations, of the organizations of the United Nations family. The results of such evaluations should be clearly presented to donors on each occasion. He welcomed the progress made in promoting harmonization between the United Nations organizations, particularly through the CCA and UNDAF initiatives. The planning and implementation of joint programming were complicated by the separate operational culture of each organization. Organizations should thus conduct common evaluations of the problems faced in carrying out joint programming and use the results for their improvement.

Mr. DORYAN (World Bank) said that, to improve the operational activities of the organizations of the United Nations family, Governments should ensure that the right commitments were made. In other words, they should continue to refine the unfinished development agenda of the twentieth century as addressed in United Nations conferences and summits. The MDGs were a significant step in that direction. A global enabling environment should be consolidated through stronger links between trade and development, full implementation of debt commitments under the highly-indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative, and a dynamic international economy, leading to a growth in FDI.

The country strategy, or poverty reduction strategy in low-income countries, should provide the framework for development activities, with a view to improving the coherence and effectiveness of national decision-making processes in conjunction with the development partners. The panel discussion with the United Nations country team for Senegal at a previous meeting had highlighted the importance of the biannual donor coordination meeting, chaired by UNDP and the Bank. Such events were designed to improve the distribution of responsibilities among the development partners.

An agreement reached between the United Nations Development Group and the Bank concerning annual progress reports regarding the MDGs and PRSPs underlined the complementary nature of the two types of reporting. While reports concerning the MDGs were designed to mobilize public opinion, the PRSP report was more technical in character and attempted to identify the responsibilities of the various development partners.

The Bank strongly advocated an increase in ODA. It was currently producing a set of country-based studies to identify the precise amount of additional resources necessary for achieving the MDGs. Nevertheless, until those resources became available, budgets had to be planned in accordance with current funding levels. He called for further harmonization of programme cycles between the organization of the United Nations family and greater efforts to streamline management processes.

Mr. AKINSANYA (Nigeria) said that a new development paradigm had emerged from the Monterrey Consensus, the commitments of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the MDGs. The fulfilment of commitments by all parties should be the

guiding philosophy if the confidence of the world's 1.2 billion poor people and the credibility of the United Nations were to be sustained. Development cooperation was a pact between partners, dependent upon every link in the chain. While Governments were responsible for formulating and implementing national development strategies, the international community - including the international financial institutions - must provide the enabling environment for strategies to become more than good intentions.

Most developing countries would be unable to achieve the MDGs without external resources to supplement their own. Even at the desired rate of 0.7 per cent, ODA was unlikely to meet the requirements of developing countries, in view of the burden of external debt obligations. His delegation reiterated its call for debt remission and greater efforts to stem the flight of capital.

Welcoming the broadening dialogue between the Council and the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO, he said that the time had come to create a forum in the Council for an exchange of views on the lingering debt crisis with members of the Paris and London Clubs and other interested parties. He expressed his delegation's concern about the decline in core resources for almost all United Nations funds and programmes, which made it less likely that developing-country needs would be taken into account.

Calling for a shift in focus towards long-term programming and development, he urged the United Nations to set up an early-warning mechanism to respond to conflict situations. Conflicts, and the corresponding demand for humanitarian assistance, continued to deprive long-term development projects of much-needed resources. Effective conflict prevention was a far better alternative to costly post-conflict reconstruction.

Mr. LANGMORE (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the preparation of PRSPs was an important avenue of support for low-income countries. An inter-agency task force had been set up to assess ways in which the United Nations system could learn from the experience of PRSPs. The extent of broad-based participation in the PRSP preparatory process was a key factor in their success. A more open policy dialogue with community organizations, workers, employers and other business associations would be extremely valuable.

The United Nations system could improve its participation in the process by enhanced collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions, the alignment of UNDAF and CCAs, and the harmonization of programme cycles. Many PRSPs failed to pay enough attention to the detailed financial and human commitments required to implement recommendations. They should also focus more on social aspects, such as employment, welfare, and the changing age structure of populations. Effective integration of the goal of poverty reduction into national policies was still required, as well as the imaginative application of PRSP proposals to policy development. It was important to explore new avenues for financing development activities, such as the proposal by the Government of the United Kingdom to set up an international finance facility, a fresh discussion on special drawing rights (SDRs) or improved international cooperation to prevent tax evasion.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) took the Chair.

Mr. ROJAS (Chile) said that, because of its middle-income status, his country had been excluded from operational activities as a result of the decline in core resources. His Government had consequently increased its allocation of funds to social programmes designed to assist the most vulnerable sectors of society. He thanked the UNDP for its invaluable support, through co-financing initiatives, to programmes relating to health, environmental protection and drugs control. However, the process of poverty eradication would be substantially more effective with the help of the international community. He urged donors not to forget the middle-income developing countries in their development cooperation.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.